



## ***Embassy of the United States of America***

Public Affairs Office

### **PRESS RELEASE**

Freetown

September 11, 2012

Contact: Boa Lee

Tel: 076 515 000

### **United States and Sierra Leone Sign Open Skies Air Transport Agreement**

(FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE) -- On September 10 in Washington, D.C., Under Secretary Robert Hormats and Sierra Leone's Minister of Aviation and Transportation Vandí Chidi Minah signed an Open Skies air services agreement that will formalize the liberalization of a bilateral aviation relationship. The United States and Sierra Leone initialed the agreement in June 2012, and it has been applied via comity and reciprocity since that time. The Open Skies Agreement enters into force upon signature of the two parties.

In his remarks, Under Secretary Hormats specifically thanked both delegations for their work over the last year to reach this important moment. He mentioned also the significant work of the American Chamber of Commerce and U.S. businesses that enthusiastically supported the agreement and will now work to bring more of the U.S. aviation private sector to Sierra Leone.

The Open Skies Agreement establishes a liberalized aviation relationship between the United States and Sierra Leone. It creates opportunities for strengthening the economic partnership between the United States and Sierra Leone through closer links in transport and trade.

U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone Michael Owen said, "This agreement marks yet another important step forward in the increasing engagement between our two countries."

Open Skies agreements permit unrestricted air service by the airlines of both countries between and beyond the other's territory, eliminating restrictions on how often the carriers fly, the kind of aircraft they use and the prices they charge. This agreement will allow for the strengthening and expansion of our strong trade and tourism links with Sierra Leone, benefitting U.S. and Sierra Leonean businesses and travelers by expanding opportunities for air services and encouraging vigorous price competition by airlines, while preserving our commitments to aviation safety and security.

The United States has over 100 Open Skies agreements with partners around the world and at all levels of development. For more information about Open Skies, please visit:

<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/tra/ata/index.htm>